Nurses’ Role in Early Child Development: Exploring the Views of Global Leaders

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BACKGROUND

What is Early Child Development (ECD)?
The early life experiences are considered a strong indicator among the social determinants of health. Advancement in basic and intervention science shows early years of human life is a critical and sensitive period to experiences any promoting developmental interventions which have a great impact throughout the lifespan.

ECD is defined as the period of human development from conception to eight years of life (Irvin et al. 2007). However, scientific evidence confirms conception to age three years as the time during which adverse exposures exert the greatest harm, and effective interventions create the greatest benefit (Richter et al. 2016).

Nurses’ Role in ECD
Nurses are the one mostly received the newborns in this world and play a pivotal role in the enhancement of early child development in practice and research. Nurses attend to their social responsibilities and have the ability to address global challenges and priorities. However, understanding nurses’ roles in the context of early child development from a theoretical and empirical perspective are still limited.

Global Leadership in ECD
Global agencies have invested substantial resources and strategies to advocate for early child development. These resources and strategies are deemed instrumental in addressing vulnerabilities and enhancing human capabilities. Nurses can utilize ECD knowledge in practice, education and create the greatest benefit.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Capabilities Approach: A Human Development Theory:
Nussbaum (2011) linked human capabilities to theories of justice and inequity. She argued for the quality of life for all people and outlined the importance of creating opportunities that support diverse human capabilities. The elements of capability approach are:

- Each person considered as an end
- Focused on choice of freedom
- Concerned with social justice and inequality
- Role of government and public policy
- Pluralist about values

Nussbaum (2011) focused on “combined capabilities” of human by merging the “basic capabilities” (health, education, and shelter) and “intended capabilities” (personal, intellectual and emotional capacities) of a person to strive for the freedom of opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and social environment.

Health professionals working in field of community, family, maternal and child health has great potential to adopt the capabilities approach to influence the care and support given to children and their families especially in early years of life. The capabilities approach is instrumental in focusing determinants of health in early years of life from equity and justice perspectives.

PURPOSE

Nurses have the collective obligation to ensure children receive care in meaningful ways. An integrative review guided by Nussbaum’s framework of capabilities, aimed to examined the role of nurses, as seen by global leaders in relation to early child development. The integrative literature review focused on the following questions:

- What are the considerations of global leaders regarding nurses’ roles in early child development?
- What are the contributions and barriers of global leaders in supporting and enhancing nurses’ roles in early child development?

METHOD

Literature Search Process

While nurses play a significant role in the well-being of communities, their contributions have not been systematically supported and inquired into in the global context.

- Nurses can engage in promoting ECD activities which leads to
decrease the burden of the diseases and generate the opportunity for young children to thrive to their maximum potential.
- The global leadership in health especially nursing leaders can invest in ECD to create long-term impact in enhancing safe and supportive early child development.
- Nurses can utilize ECD knowledge in practice, education and research across health institutions and communities as a tool to achieve targeted Sustainable Development Goals focused on health, social, and the environment.

Consequently, it is important to strengthen the ways global leaders can support early child development while placing nurses in the center of their efforts.

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Note: All images retrieved from free stock images website https://pexels.com

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